

Making a difference: translating transport research into policy implementation

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Transport research in NZ



There is a lot of transport research being done

- ▶ At Universities and other research organisations
 - ▶ *Although no University does everything and/or dominates*
- ▶ In a range of disciplines
 - ▶ *Engineering, Psychology, Geography, Health, Business, IT, etc*
- ▶ At a range of levels
 - ▶ *From student projects to multi-million dollar research projects*
- ▶ Usually multi-disciplinary
 - ▶ *Often within non-transport projects*
- ▶ Not always easy to find it
- ▶ Difficult to work out how much

Transport policy in NZ



There is a lot of transport policy being planned and implemented

- ▶ MoT, NZTA, TLAs
 - ▶ *Sometimes sub-contracted to consultants*

Evidence based policy

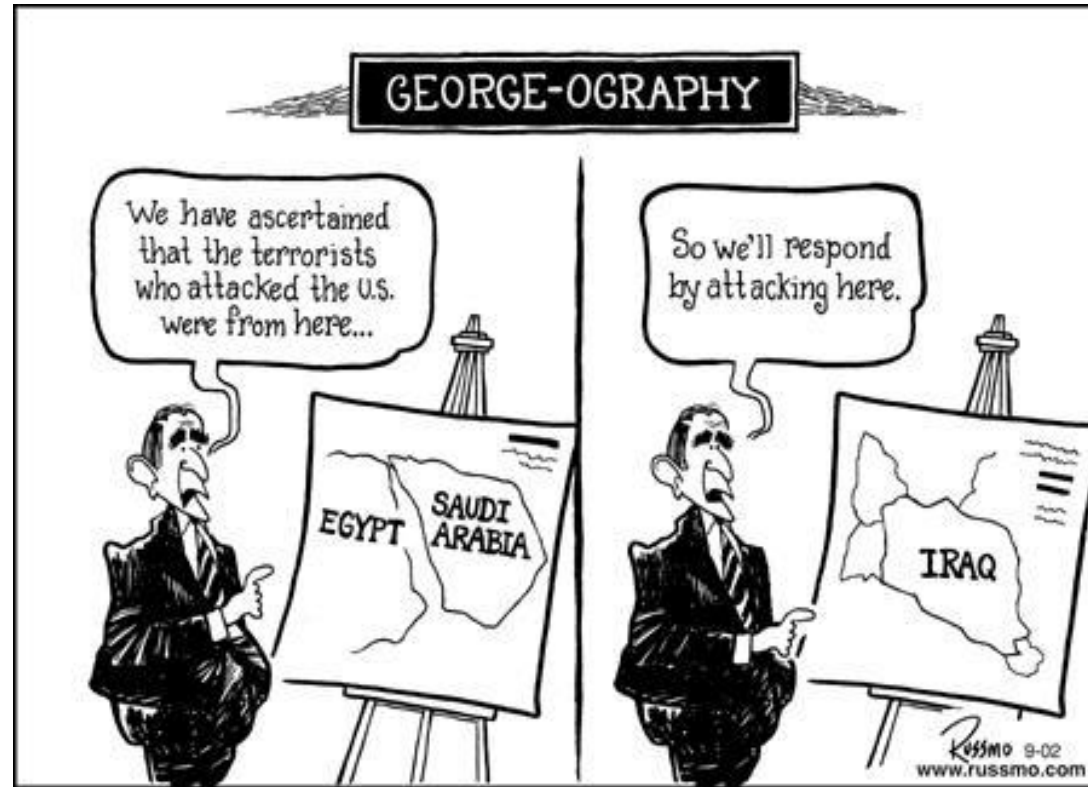


Good evidence base
.. leading to...
Good policy

But this doesn't always happen

► Why not?

Researchers and policy makers
not always linked



Why don't researchers engage better



They are busy

They don't know who to talk to

- ▶ MoT website not hugely helpful

There are no rewards for engaging

- ▶ Journal articles
- ▶ Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF)

Under the PBRF system of performance evaluation, academics who engage with policy-focused work, that is inherently less likely, or slower, to generate high-impact publications, are penalised. Ironically

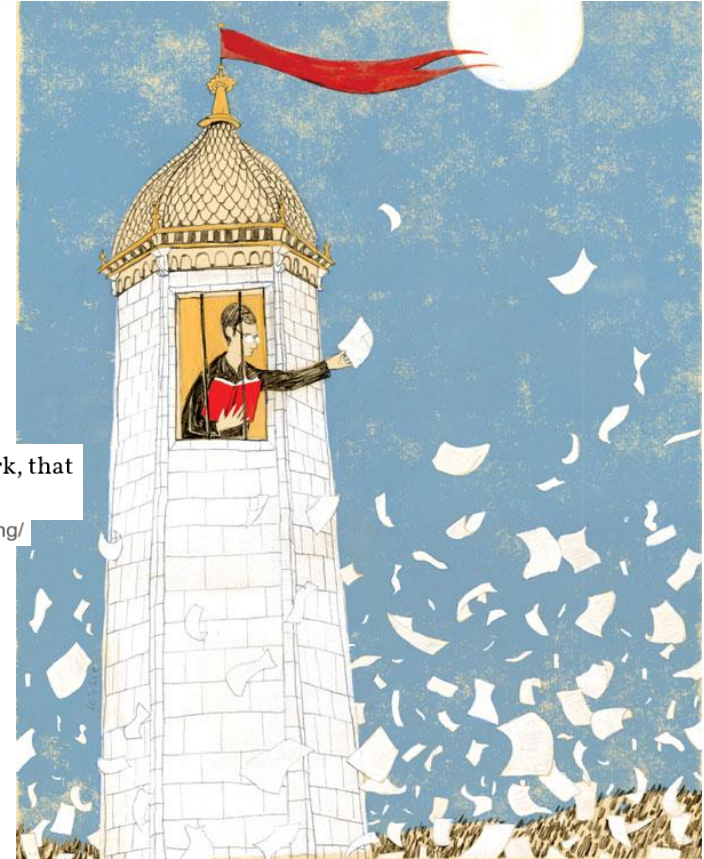
<https://sciblogs.co.nz/politecol/2016/07/14/academics-less-engaged-policy-making/>

They are often introverts

Climatic Change (2012) 112:233–242
DOI 10.1007/s10584-011-0205-7

Personality type differences between Ph.D. climate researchers and the general public: implications for effective communication

C. Susan Weiler • Jason K. Keller • Christina Olex



Why don't policy makers engage better?



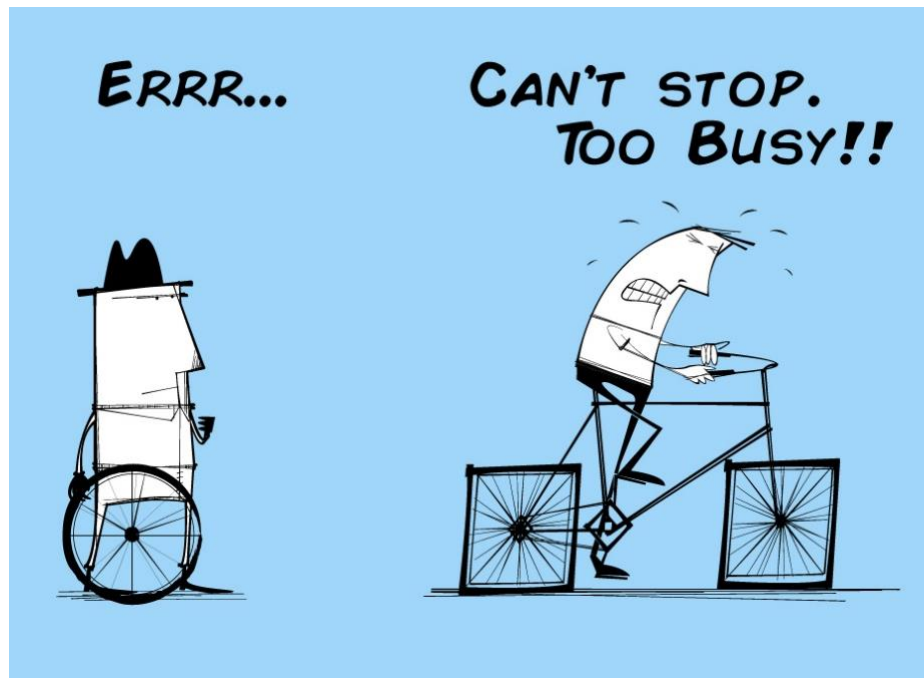
They are busy

They don't know who to talk to

- ▶ Hidden in all sorts of places
- ▶ Not always obvious who are experts

Academic literature is hard to read

- ▶ Jargon
- ▶ Technical
- ▶ Theoretical
- ▶ Irrelevant



Why should we engage?

See research *actually* inform policy

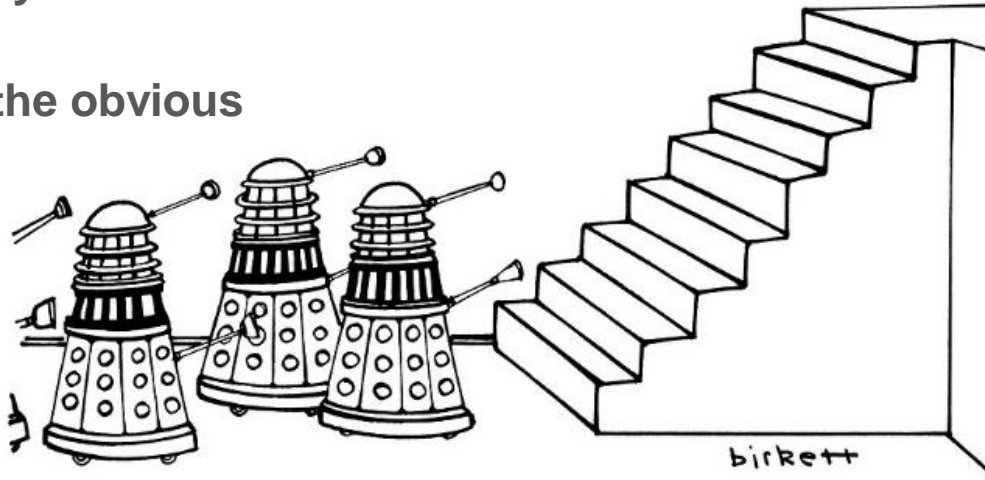
- ▶ Not just journal articles and PBRF scores

Make a difference

Moral responsibility?

- ▶ Tax payer funded

To avoid missing the obvious



“Well, this certainly buggers our plan to conquer the Universe.”

Models of engagement

Scholarships	e.g. summer, Masters, PhD
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheap	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential quality issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quick implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time advertising, assessing and selecting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build sector capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MoT/NZTA contact to maximise value

Models of engagement



Staff secondments (or researcher in residence)	e.g. Unis to MoT, and/or vice-versa
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff see workings of other organisation• Builds networks leading to ongoing relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less value if 'virtual' secondment• Risk of no output• Risk of negative experiences

Models of engagement



Funded University posts		e.g. Twyford-Genter-Jones Professor of Transport	
Pros		Cons	
• Can deliver priority research if 'control' held by govt and/or expectations/outcomes clear		• Can be wasted if no 'control' by govt and/or expectations/outcomes clear	
• Good if research team established		• Restricted to skills at one Uni	
• Can link to upskilling of MoT/NZTA staff at University			

Models of engagement



MoT/NZTA Funded Research Lab	e.g. funded research staff
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible work program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires active engagement of MoT/NZTA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short, medium and long term projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restricted to skills at one Uni
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsive analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs clarity of expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could be co-funded (free senior staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive

Models of engagement



Transport aligned research funding	e.g. MBIE/HRC funded research
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliant on others
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No extra management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transactionally high (for researchers)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No clear role/rights of 'end users'

Models of engagement



New Transport funded research	e.g. MoT/NZTA funded research
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directed by MoT/NZTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not reliant on others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research process management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transactionally high (for researchers)

Models of engagement



Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) or National Science Challenge (NSC)		e.g. MBIE funded research program	
Pros		Cons	
• Big picture, big projects		• Expensive (but not MoT/NZTA!)	
• Cross-disciplinary		• May become inflexible over time	
• Multiple research groups		• Unclear role of 'end users'	
• Long term commitment		• Diluted focus (not transport driven)	
		• Too late for new NSC	

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Thank you

